

# Domestic Violence

## Fact about Domestic

- Domestic Violence is virtually impossible to measure with absolute precision due to numerous complications including the societal stigma that inhibits victims from disclosing their abuse and the varying definitions of abuse used from study to study. Estimates range from 960,000 incidents of violence against a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend per year to 3.9 million women who are physically abused each year.

*Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report: Violence by Intimates: Analysis of Data on Crimes by Current or Former Spouses, Boyfriends, and Girlfriends, March 1998 and The Commonwealth Fund, First Comprehensive National Health Survey of American Women, July, 1993*

- During 1994, 21% of all violent victimization against women were committed by an intimate, but only 4% of violent victimizations against men were committed by an intimate.

*Bureau of Justice Statistic Special Report: Sex Differences in Violent Victimization, 1994 (NCJ - 164508), September, 1997, pp.1-3*

- In the United States, domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women between the ages of 15 and 44 ñ more than car accidents, muggings and rapes combined.

*Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1991, Uniform Crime Reports*

- 37% of women injured by violence and treated in an emergency room were injured by an intimate; less than 5% of men injured by violence and treated in an emergency were injured by an intimate.

*Bureau of Justice Statistics: Violence-Related Injuries Treated in Hospital Emergency Departments (NCJ - 156921), August 1997.P.5*

- Separated/divorced women are 14 times more likely than married women to report having been a victim of violence by their spouse or ex-spouse.

*Bureau of Justice Statistics: Female Victims of Violent Crime, 1991.*

- For homicides in which the victim-killer relationship was known, 31% of female victims were killed by an intimate. 4% of male victims were killed by an intimate.

*Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report: Sex Difference in Violent Victimization, 1994 (NCJ - 164508), September, 1997, p.1*

- In a New York study of 50 battered women, 75% said they had been harassed by the batterer while they were at work, 50% reported missing an average of three days per month, and 44% lost at least one job for reasons directly related to the abuse.

*Friedman, Lucy and Cooper, Sarah. The Cost of Domestic Violence, New York, Victim Services Research Department, 1987*

- Complications of pregnancy, including low weight gain, anemia, infections, and first and second trimester bleeding are significantly higher for abused women.

*Parker, B., McFarlane, J., & Soeken, K. (1996). Abuse During Pregnancy: Association with Maternal Health and Infant Birthweight. Nursing Research 45, 32-37*

- From 1987 to 1990, crime cost Americans \$450 billion a year. Adult victims of domestic violence incurred 15% of the total cost of crime on victims (\$67 billion).

*National Institute of Justice, 1996, Victims Costs and Consequences, Anew Look. Washington, D. C.*

- Between 1.5 to 3 million children witness domestic violence annually. In homes where domestic violence occurs, children are abused at a rate 1,500 percent higher than the national average.

*National Woman Abuse Prevention Project, Washington D. C.*

- Men who have witnessed their parent's domestic violence are three times more likely to abuse their own wives than children of non-violent parents, with the sons of the most violent parents being 1000 times more likely to become wife beaters.

*Straus, M.A., Gelles, R.J. & Steinmetz, S. Behind Closed Doors. Doubleday, Anchor, 1980*

- Immigrant women may suffer higher rates of battering than U.S. citizens because they come from cultures which accept domestic violence, or because they have less access to legal and social services than U.S. citizens. In addition, immigrant batterers and victims may believe that the penalties and protections of the U.S. legal system do not apply to them.

*Orloff et al., With No Place to Turn: Improving Advocacy for Battered Women, Family Law Quarterly, vol. 29, no.2, 313 (Summer 1995)*

- Each year, between 50,000 and 100,000 lesbian women and as many as 5000,000 Gay men are battered.

*Murphy, Queer Justice: Equal Protection for Victims of Same-Sex Domestic Violence, 30 Val. U. L. Rev. 335 (1995)*

- Domestic violence is statistically consistent across racial and ethnic boundaries.

*Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report: Violence Against Women: Estimates from the Redesigned Survey (NCJ - 154348), August 1995, p.3*

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is domestic violence?**

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior that one intimate partner, such as a spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend, exerts over another as a means of control. Domestic violence can physically harm, arouse fear, prevent an individual from doing what they wish, or force an individual to behave in ways they do not wish to. The severity of domestic violence usually increases over time. It often begins with emotional abuse and progresses toward physical threats or bodily harm. Abusive episodes are often interspersed with periods of affectionate behavior.

### **What are some ways a domestic violence victim can stay safe?**

The ultimate responsibility for stopping the violence lies with the batterer. Victims may choose any of the following actions to help protect themselves.

#### **• Creating A Safety Plan**

Domestic violence victims may create a safety plan for themselves to use in an emergency situation, to plan their departure from an abusive relationship, or to take precautions after the relationship has ended. A safety plan is a process of evaluating the risks and benefits of different options. For domestic violence victims, risks may be attached to every option. A well-thought out safety plan identifies ways to reduce the risks. Domestic violence support service agencies can often assist with the safety planning.

#### **• Domestic Violence Support Services**

Domestic violence support services offer free and confidential advocacy to domestic violence victims. Many programs maintain 24-hour crisis hotlines to answer questions about domestic violence and to give support and referrals to other community agencies. Programs often provide accompaniment to court, police and related social services.

#### **• Domestic Violence Shelters**

Domestic violence shelters may offer assistance in obtaining permanent housing, services for children who have witnessed violence and counseling or support groups for women.

#### **• Obtaining a Restraining Order**

A restraining order, also called an abuse prevention order or a 209A Order, is a civil court order that can be obtained by victims abused by a current or former intimate partner or family or household

member. A restraining order prohibits the abuser from hurting or threatening the victim. The court can impose additional conditions on the abuser, such as paying child support, keeping a certain distance from the victim or leaving a residence shared with the victim. A restraining order is enforced by law enforcement officers, and violating a restraining order is a criminal offense. If you are being abused, you can obtain a restraining order by going to the Clerk's Office of the District Court, Superior Court or Probate in Massachusetts. Most courts are able to provide an advocate for victims applying for a restraining order.

### **What are some ways perpetrators are held accountable for their violent behavior?**

Domestic violence is a crime. Perpetrators of domestic violence must be held accountable in order for their abusive behavior to cease.

#### **• The Criminal Justice Legal System**

The criminal justice legal system involves the police, the District Attorney's Offices, judges, probation officers and others who work with the court system. The police are responsible for serving a defendant of a domestic violence restraining order with the proper paperwork. They also must enforce the protective order should there be a violation. Many police departments have mandatory arrests policies when it comes to domestic violence. They must make an arrest if there is sufficient evidence that a domestic violence misdemeanor or felony has occurred. It is the role of the district attorney (also called a prosecutor) to bring cases of domestic violence before the court. When cases are brought before the court a victim witness advocate is available to offer information regarding bail, testimony, sentencing, and general trial information to the victim of the domestic violence court proceedings. If the perpetrator is convicted of domestic violence a judge may order fines, jail time, probation or batterer intervention.

#### **• Batterer Intervention**

Batterer intervention is an educational group for people who have been abusive or controlling towards an intimate partner. The program holds batterers accountable for abusing intimate partners and children: its goal is to change batterers' attitudes, beliefs and behaviors concerning intimate partnerships and parenting, and increase victim and child safety through partner contacts and referrals. Programs meet weekly and batterers must pay for the services. During the course of the program the batterer must remain violence free, accept responsibility for the abusive behavior, and meet the attendance and financial requirements of the program. The court may mandate batterer's intervention or a batterer may enter the program voluntarily.

### **Are you or someone you love a victim?**

Although most people in relationships argue and have disagreements with their partners once in a while, there is a big difference between having a disagreement and repeatedly hurting, intimidating, or threatening someone. It is **NEVER** okay for one person to abuse another. Abusive behavior can take many forms.

#### **Economic Abuse**

- Preventing someone from getting or keeping a job
- Refusing to work
- Taking money or withholding money
- Making all the decisions regarding money

#### **Emotional/Verbal/Psychological Abuse**

- Name calling using repeated insults with the intention of humiliation or degradation
- Controlling what another person wears, where another person goes, whom another person sees

- Checking the mileage on the car or refusing someone access to the car
- Harassment at work
- Blaming the victim for the abusive behavior
- Abusing or threatening to abuse pets
- Destroying personal possessions
- Punching holes in wall
- Making threats or hurt or kidnap the children
- Threatening further abuse or suicide if the victim tries to leave the relationship
- Wielding a gun or other weapon in a threatening way

### **Physical Abuse**

- Pinching/squeezing
- Pushing/shoving/jerking/pulling/shaking
- Slapping/biting
- Hitting/punching/kicking
- Throwing objects
- Using weapons
- Restraining/kidnapping
- Choking
- Assault during pregnancy

### **Sexual Abuse**

- Treating victim as a sex object
- Harassment about imagined affairs
- Unwanted touching
- Forced prostitution
- Cheating/having affairs
- Sex for the purpose of hurting or gaining control

### **Some other questions to consider if you think you might be in an abusive relationship:**

- Do you often doubt your judgement or wonder if you are "crazy"?
- Are you often afraid of your partner and do you express your opinion less and less freely?
- Have you developed fears of other people and tend to see others less often?
- Do you spend a lot of time watching for his/her bad and not so bad moods before bringing up a subject?
- Do you ask for permission to spend money, socialize with friends?
- Do you have fears of doing the wrong thing or getting into trouble?

- Have you lost confidence in your abilities, become increasingly depressed and feel trapped and powerless?

### **Signs to look for in abusive personality:**

**JEALOUSY** - Jealousy is not a sign of love, as many batterers will state, but a sign of insecurity and possessiveness.

**CONTROLLING BEHAVIOR** - Batterer's will often "check up" on their victims, not let them make any decisions, and monitor their every move. Batterers will tell the victim they do this only because they care very deeply.

**QUICK INVOLVEMENT** - Many batterers will pressure their partner for a commitment. Batterers have more over their partner when they are married or living together.

**UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS** - Batterers expect their partners to be perfect and to be aware of each of their emotional and physical needs.

**ISOLATION** - Batterers try to keep their partners away from family and friends. They may do this by separating their partners geographically from social connections or they may manipulate their partners into believing that friends and family are bad influence.

**BLAMES OTHERS FOR OWN PROBLEMS** - Batterers do not take responsibility for their actions, they blame others for everything that goes wrong in their life.

**BLAMES OTHERS FOR OWN FEELINGS** - Batterers will often say that the victim knows how to provoke emotions, especially anger. Everyone is responsible for his or her own feelings and behavior.

**HYPERSENSITIVITY** - Batterers take the lightest setback as personal attacks.

**CRUELTY TO ANIMALS OR CHILDREN** - Batterers may harm them, or just be insensitive to an animal or child who may be suffering.

**"PLAYFUL" USE OF FORCE IN SEX** - Batterers show little concern about whether their partner wants to have or is enjoying sex.

**VERBAL ABUSE** - Batterers say things that are meant to be cruel and harmful. They may curse their partners or put down their partner's accomplishments.

**RIGID SEX ROLES** - Batterers may see women as inferior to men and unable to have an identity unless she is in the relationship. The batterer's abusive behavior may be based on sexist attitudes.

**DR. JECKYL AND MR. HYDE** - Batterers are typically explosive and moody.

**\*\*PAST BATTERING\*\*** - A batterer will beat any partner they are with, if the person is with them long enough for the violence to begin.

**\*\*THREATS OF VIOLENCE\*\*** - When batterers use threats they typically will contend that they were only joking around, that their threats were not serious.

**\*\*BREAKING OR STRIKING OBJECTS\*\*** - Batterers use this behavior as punishment for their partner. They will only break their partner's possessions, and not their own.

**\*\*USE OF FORCE DURING AN ARGUMENT\*\*** - Batterers will sometimes hold their partners down or physically restrain them from leaving the room.

### **Resources for Victims**

If you are a victim of domestic violence, help is available throughout Massachusetts. The following programs offer a range of services to victims at no charge. These services include, but are not limited to, crisis intervention, individual counseling, group therapy, support groups, safety planning,

and legal advocacy. For the shelter nearest you, call SAFELINK, the Statewide Domestic Violence Hotline, at (877) 785-2020.

**Domestic Violence Programs in Massachusetts:**

Adult Out-Patient Clinic – **Northampton** (413) 582-4256  
Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence, Inc. – **Boston** (617) 338-2350  
Battered Women's Resources – **Leominster** (978) 537-2306  
Baystate Medical Center – **Springfield** (413) 794-9793  
Berkshire County Children's Advocacy Center – **Pittsfield** (413) 499-2800  
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Safe Transitions – **Boston** (617) 667-8241  
Brockton Family & Community Services – **Brockton** (508) 583-2045  
Cambridge Hospital – **Cambridge** (617) 498-1000  
Casa Myrna Vasquez – **Boston** (617) 521-0100  
CCHERS – **Boston** (617) 373-5779  
Center for Heath and Human Services – **New Bedford** (508) 996-3147  
Children's Hospital – **Boston** (617) 355-4760  
Clinical & Support Options – **Greenfield** (413) 774-1000  
Daybreak – **Worcester** (508) 755-9030  
DOVE – **Quincy** (617) 472-9024  
Elizabeth Freeman Center – **Pittsfield** (413) 499-2425  
Elizabeth Stone House – **Jamaica Plain** (617) 522-3659  
Everywoman's Center – **Amherst** (413) 545-0883  
FINEX House – **Jamaica Plain** (617) 288-1054  
Fenway Community Health Center – **Boston** (617) 927-6205  
Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project – **Cambridge** (617) 354-6056  
Greater Lynn Senior Services (elderly victims) – **Lynn** (781) 599-0110  
HarborCOV – **Chelsea** (617) 884-9799  
Haven at Massachusetts General Hospital, Inc. – **Boston** (617) 724-0054  
Health and Education Services, Inc. – **Beverly** (978) 927-4506  
Help for Abused Women and Children (HAWC) – **Salem** (978) 744-8552  
Health Care of Southeastern Massachusetts, Inc. – **Brockton** (508) 580-3964  
Independence House – **Hyannis** (800) 439-6507  
International Institute of Boston – **Boston** (617) 695-9990  
Martha's Vineyard Community Services – Vineyard (508) 693-7900  
Network for Battered Lesbians – **Boston** (617) 695-0877  
NELCWIT – **Greenfield** (413) 772-0871  
New Bedford Women's Center – **New Bedford** (508) 996-3343  
New Beginnings – **Westfield** (508) 778-1893  
New Hope, Inc. – **Attleboro** (800) 323-4673  
Northampton Center for Children & Families, Inc. – **Northampton** (413) 587-3265  
OMEGA Emotional Support Group – **Somerville** (617) 776-6369  
On The Rise, Inc. – **Cambridge** (617) 497-7968  
Our Sister's Place – **Fall River** (508) 677-0224

Renewal House – **Roxbury** (617) 566-6881  
Respond – **Somerville** (617) 623-5900  
Safe Passage – **Northampton** (413) 586-1125  
Safe Place, Inc. – **Nantucket** (508) 228-2111  
SAFELINK – **Statewide Domestic Violence Hotline** (877) 785-2020  
Saint Anne's Hospital – **Fall River** (508) 674-5741  
ServiceNet, Inc. – **Northampton** (413) 584-7329  
South Shore Women's Center – **Plymouth** (508) 746-2664  
Support Committee for Battered Women – **Waltham** (781) 891-0724  
Trauma Center – **Brookline** (617) 731-3200  
Transition House – **Cambridge** (617) 591-6800  
Wayside Youth & Family Support Network, Inc. – **Milford** (508) 478-6888  
Womanshelter/Companeras, Inc. – **Holyoke** (413) 538-9717  
Womansplace – **Brockton** (508) 588-2041  
Women's Crisis Center of Greater Newburyport, Inc. – **Amesbury** (978) 465-0999  
Women's Protective Services/SMOC – **Framingham** (508) 820-0834  
Women's Resource Center, Inc. – **Lawrence** (978) 685-2481  
Women's Resource Center, Inc. – **Haverhill** (978) 373-4041  
Women's Resources – **Fitchburg** (978) 342-9355  
Women's Service Center – **Pittsfield** (413) 443-0089  
Women's Service Center – **North Adams** (413) 663-9709  
Women's Support Center – **Vineyard** (508) 696-7233  
Worcester Youth Guidance Center – **Worcester** (508) 791-3261  
YWCA of Western Massachusetts, Inc. – **Springfield** (413) 732-3121